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Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board **Fines Ventura County Fire Department \$354,100**

LOS ANGELES--The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has fined the Ventura County Fire Department \$354,100 for 125 violations of the *California Water Code*.

The violations occurred at Fire Station #30, at 325 Hillcrest Drive in Thousand Oaks between August 2001 and January 2004 when 329,665 gallons of groundwater exceeded specified effluent limitations. The violations resulted in groundwater with elevated levels of MTBE, or methyl tertiary butyl ether, benzene, total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), lead oil, grease and other pollutants being discharged into a storm drain emptying into Calleguas Creek.

Under permits issued by the regional Water Board, the fire department was pumping and treating groundwater that had been contaminated by fuel from an old underground storage tank. The permits set treatment procedures and effluent limits that allowed extracted groundwater to be discharged to Calleguas Creek without environmental harm.

The fine is for violating *Section 1338(c)(1) of the California Water Code* and Los Angeles Regional Water Board Orders 97-046 and R4-2002-0125. The breakdown is as follows:

- \$340,000 for not meeting discharge effluent limitations
- \$6,000 for not submitting accurate monitoring reports
- \$8,100 for avoided costs (economic savings resulting from not following permit requirements) and administrative expenses.

The money will be used primarily for cleanup, abatement or special environmental purposes.

“The Calleguas Creek provides critical habitat for plants and animals and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors,” said David Nahai, Chair of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. “It also serves to replenish aquifers which supply much needed potable water. To protect human health and the environment--and our very limited sources of drinking water--Federal and State clean water laws must be followed and enforced,” Nahai said.

The fire department has 90 days to request that the Water Board reconsider the violations and penalties.

The Los Angeles Water Board is one of nine regional boards in the State. Among its principal duties, the Board sets region-wide water quality standards and activity-specific waste discharge requirements, enforces both federal and state clean water statutes, regulates cleanup of sites which pose an immediate or potential threat to water quality and educates the public on water quality issues. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board is comprised of nine individuals, each of whom is appointed by the Governor, and a small professional staff, comprised mostly of scientists, engineers and geologists. (END)